

THE ANGEL OF PEACE

Podesta, was sentenced to death for some rash words he had uttered against the State. Fra Tommaso Caffarini found him in the prison of the Commune, raging with despair, refusing to make his confession or to hear a word about the salvation of his soul. He had never received the sacraments since his first Communion. Then Catherine came to his cell, bringing him such mystical consolation that he became "like a meek lamb led to the sacrifice," and died with Christ's name and hers on his lips, she receiving his severed head into her hands. "He met his death," writes Fra Tommaso, "with such wonderful devotion that it seemed not that of one condemned for any crime of man, but rather the passing away of some holy martyr. All who witnessed it, among whom I was one, were moved to such intense compunction of heart, that never, until then, do I remember having been present at any funeral where there was so much devotion as at his." "I will return presently to the wonderful letter in which Catherine informs Fra Raimondo of every detail in the tragedy turned triumph; for it is one of those that most vividly illustrate the words of Stefano Maconi, that in her letters we may perceive "the living image of that divine virgin, expressed in the most true features of her holiness."

In the summer of this year, Catherine left the city, to carry on her spiritual ministry in the Sienese contado. The immediate occasion of her going was a feud that had arisen between two of the principal members of the great house of the Salimbeni, Agnolino di Giovanni di Agnolino and Cione di Sandro, which was threatening to set the whole district once more aflame with civil war. A dispute concerning the possession of a castle, in which they both claimed a share, was the ostensible cause of the quarrel, but there was also a political difference between the two nobles. Cione, a restless and turbulent spirit, inclined to support the policy of the papal legates in Tuscany, from whom he was always looking for aid against the liberties of

¹ *Contestatio Fr. TAomaf, Processus*, col. 1266. The story is one of Fra Tommaso's additions in the *Leggtnda minore*, pp. 93, 94, as Fra Raimondo, being then absent from Siena, does not mention it. See below, chapter xvi.